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REMARKS ON THE PRESENT
STATE OF CLASSICAL
SCHOLARSHIP

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2. REMARKS
ON
THE PRESENT STATE OF
CLASSICAL SCHOLARSHIP
AND
DISTINCTIONS

IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

BY THE
REV. WILLIAM LINWOOD, M.A., M.R.A.S.,
STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH.

"Hinc fortis Etruria crevit."

OXFORD:

J. H. PARKER.

—
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TO THOSE
WHO HAVE SHOWN BY THEIR AFTER LIVES THAT
THE DISTINCTIONS ACQUIRED BY THEM
IN OUR
UNIVERSITIES AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
HAVE BEEN THE
EARNEST OF THEIR FUTURE EMINENCE
AND
TO ALL WHO WOULD FOLLOW IN
THEIR STEPS
THESE PAGES ARE INSCRIBED.

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REMARKS,*

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WE have occasionally seen publications, coming apparently from Members of the University, bearing such titles as, "The Student's Guide to University Honours," and others equally imposing. We shall not imitate their example, and if they succeed we do not envy their success. They who think they can point out a short way to University distinctions, may do so if they can; they are welcome to all the credit which may result from the attempt. We differ from all such persons for two reasons. We do not think University honours ought to be thus put forward as the main object for which men come up to reside amongst us; and, in the next place, we consider all such compendious methods as infinitely more likely to defeat, than they can possibly be calculated to promote, the object which they profess to have in view.

But let it not be supposed that we undervalue such distinctions. We never remember to have heard any one do so except those, who, being unable to obtain these honours for themselves, have found a malignant satisfaction in the less illustrious office of

* We are aware that pamphlets have been written by some eminent members of the University of Cambridge, on the subject of Private Tuition. We have, however, not as yet read them, wishing not to mix our argument up with the affairs of the sister University. If any coincidences of opinion, therefore, exist, they are independent ones.

disparaging them in others. The names which stand associated with this species of distinction are an irrefragable evidence of their value. Any one who will examine the calendar of either University, will find among those who there first entered upon the path of honourable ambition, a large number of such as, beginning with the Prime Minister himself, have in the Cabinet and in the Senate, on the Episcopal and Judicial bench, or in other high situations of active and official life, followed up the distinctions of their youth in the enlarged arena opened by their maturer years. Nor have those judged them unimportant, whom no one can suppose to have been even partly actuated by any feeling of worldly interest or ambition. Take for example the Missionary Martyn, a name which with many persons will weigh more than any of those to which we have referred. A man of weaker mind would have scrupled to pursue his former purpose of academical distinction, as inconsistent with the object to which he had resolved to dedicate his life. But he acted more wisely and better : and having secured the highest honour which his University could bestow, went forth thus accredited upon his generous errand. And all persons who desire to devote themselves to the furtherance of some special object in life, whether religious, political, or literary, will do well to attach to their names in the outset a proof of their ability which the world cannot gainsay. It is a fallacy to affirm that the studies and rewards of the University are not analogous to the purposes of their future life. The point of analogy lies in this—in the doing well whatever legitimately claims their attention for the

present, and thus, by their success in the one, proving their capacity for the prosecution and attainment of the other.

But besides this, University honours have another and more immediate utility, inasmuch as they form an encouragement to the pursuit of those studies which the wisdom of ages immemorial has marked out as the proper training for the future business of life, and upon which experience has set the seal of its approval. “Quis enim,” says the poet, “virtutem amplectitur ipsam, Præmia si tollas?” We do not discuss the morality of the sentiment; we think, as regards this question, the matter may fairly be treated in this practical manner. It is true that there always have been, and probably always will be, some few burning and shining lights, who, without any incentive besides their own passionate desire for knowledge, nay frequently, thwarted, mortified, and kept down, as far as genius can be kept down, by unfavourable or opposing circumstances, have risen to the highest point of eminence by their own unassisted efforts. But these are the exceptions to the rule. The many must be dealt with as the many, and for these the distinctions offered by the University are a legitimate inducement to pursue the object which brought them to her walls; namely, to acquire an amount of knowledge of the best and soundest kind, sufficient to fit them for playing their part upon the stage of the world, as effective and accomplished members of the community to which they belong. For let it never be forgotten, that knowledge is to be viewed (at least so we would desire to be considered as viewing it) as a means towards an end. ‘Αρχικὸν

τὸ φρονεῖν. The man who considers knowledge as his ultimatum, and terminates his views in its acquisition, stops just where he ought only to have begun. We have no feeling of respect for the selfish and solitary student; and have no desire to aid in the formation of any such character. The man who spends his whole time in acquiring that which he never reproduces, and is content to accumulate knowledge without making any attempt to impart that knowledge to others, is an unsocial and useless being; is worse, in fact, than the miser, for the miser at least leaves his riches to his descendants; the other might as well never have been born.

We have said that the studies which are chiefly pursued at our University, are those which the wisdom of ages has stamped with its approval. We say this with the fullest conviction of its truth. We cannot profess ourselves of the number of those who regard things as valuable in proportion as they are antiquated. We think but little would be gained in most instances, and that much would be lost, by returning to the exploded notions and practices of our fathers. We have no sympathy with the revival of black-letter type, oaken bindings, and brazen clasps; indeed, we cannot but think the antiquarian passion exhibited by some (we mean no offence) to approach very nearly to the ridiculous. But when the fiat of bygone ages and the verdict of our own experience go hand in hand—when it may be clearly shown that succeeding years have suggested nothing better than those which have gone before—the evidence is of a nature not to be resisted. And this is decidedly the case with respect to the classics, con-

sidered as forming the best vehicle for the instruction and education of the higher classes of our youth. We may have men of equal wit and genius in these later times. We may be far beyond the ancients in many things which we do. There may be works abounding with as much political wisdom, with as high a strain of eloquence, with as sublime flights of imagination, in the various languages of modern Europe—it may be, within the compass of English literature itself. All which the classics convey might, essentially, be taught without spending so much time in seeking it through a medium which requires a somewhat tedious process itself to be understood. Why then, it may be asked, are we to dig among the ruins of antiquity for that which lies at our very door, and employ this apparatus and parade of labour for that which, after all, may be so much more readily and easily acquired ?

The answer to be given to this question must depend much upon the character of the person by whom it is put. To the low and vulgar utilitarian, who demands an immediate result for every expenditure of time and labour, and refers all his ideas of value to the standard of a mean and sordid arithmetic—it may be sufficient to reply that the classics have always formed the education of *the gentleman*, and that they who have such feelings alone can duly appreciate their importance. It is enough to say, that this system has formed the education of those whose names are the brightest ornament to our annals, and their deeds the noblest example to their posterity. To those, however, who admitting the truth of this, would wish reasons to be given why it has been

so, a different answer is due; but it does not form part of our design to enter upon the subject. It has often enough been treated, and need not be discussed again. The intrinsic beauty and excellency of the classical authors—the splendid deeds, the illustrious sacrifices, the thrilling and lofty sentiments with which their pages are so richly studded—the remoteness of the times in which these authors lived, setting aside, or at any rate greatly diminishing, those party feelings which make us so often unwilling to learn wisdom from those nearer to, or contemporary with, ourselves—the greater facility with which facts and truths conveyed in another language, and, therefore, requiring an effort of the mind to comprehend them, are permanently retained by the memory—the advantage of limiting as far as possible the circle of *education*, by which term we understand, not the acquisition of every kind of knowledge, but a training system intended, by a process of mental concentration, to prepare the understanding to grasp whatever subject it may afterwards desire to investigate*—these form ample subjects for discussion, and admit of a most satisfactory demonstration. But our observations are directed to those who admit substantially the truth of all these positions—and we are concerned not to undertake an apology for classical education, but to shew reasons why, amongst ourselves, that education is not more efficiently performed.

* When these remarks were ready for press, we were pleased, on casually taking up the Life of Dr. Arnold, at pp. 121-2, to see much the same sentiments expressed; indeed, so much so, that we might almost be suspected of plagiarism, could we not state that we had not previously seen the passage referred to.

That this is no idle or affected ground of complaint must be felt by all who take an interest in the welfare of these studies, and who desire to see the means at the disposal of the University for their furtherance, energetically directed towards the attainment of so excellent an object. The experience of those who are engaged, whether publicly or privately, in the business of University instruction, as well as of those who are official witnesses of the respective attainments of the Candidates in our Examinations, will amply bear us out in affirming that the condition of classical scholarship among us is at present most unsatisfactory. In the assurance that our observation will be felt to be just by all who are competent to give an opinion on the subject, we shall avoid the invidious task of giving any detailed proof of our assertion, and proceed at once to the causes which may tend, as we think, to produce this result.

We are not disposed to assent to an opinion, which we know is entertained by some, that any recent or existing circumstances either have, or will have, a material effect on the studies of the University. The causes which depress the tone of our studies are of much longer continuance; and, although others may affect us for a time, they are not mainly to be sought for in any such circumstances. We allude to that excitement on controversial subjects, which has latterly been so much the object of public interest and curiosity. Of course we may be mistaken, but we do not apprehend that any very important results will follow. When every one shall have said and written all that he may have to say and write

on the matter, the subject will, we trust, exhaust itself and drop. But, be this as it may, we do not wish to mix up ourselves, or our argument, with it. There is, doubtless, much to be said on both "sides" of the question, and a great deal on neither side : but even should the strife of theologians continue, there is room enough for us and for them. Nor do we think the partizans on either side can complain, pending the adjustment of their differences, if we wish to call the attention of our younger members to more interesting and instructive objects than the spectacle of their disputes. *They*, at least, can do no good in the *melée*, and may injure themselves without benefiting others. Even should theology be intended to form the chief business of their after lives, we will venture to affirm that an early attention to controverted topics is not the best preparation for future excellence. It was well remarked by Lord Brougham, to one who asked him his opinion as to the best method for forming a consummate lawyer, "Let him begin with Juvenal and Demosthenes." We can certainly understand the feeling which may prompt persons of an ardent temperament to rush prematurely into the field of polemics : *ἐν τούτῳ κεκωλῦσθαι* [we quote from memory] *ἔδόκει ἐκάστῳ τὰ πράγματα, ω μή τις καὶ αὐτὸς ἔργῳ πάρεσται*, but it is assuredly not the way to make an "end of controversy." We apprehend that an accurate study of the classics is a far better means for doing so, inasmuch as it must prepare the student for an accurate use of the legitimate sources of all real theological information, viz. the original Scriptures and

the early Fathers of the church. Apart from all consideration of the relative importance of the subject matter, the theologian, with the Fathers for his guides, occupies the same vantage ground as the scholar, backed by the ancient lexicographers, grammarians, and scholiasts. It stands to common sense that they who lived so much nearer the original sources of information must know much more about these things than we do; it stands to common sense also, that the Fathers, being mortals like ourselves, cannot always have been right, or have agreed among themselves, and that discretion is required to use and benefit by their works. But this does not diminish their value; even if it be true that our views in some respects may be clearer than theirs, we are not to conclude that we can dispense with their assistance. A pygmy, as some one has remarked, on a giant's shoulders will see a little farther than a giant; but the giant is still a giant, and the pygmy is a pygmy. As for the objections urged by prejudiced ignorance against the Fathers (we remember reading of an old lady, for instance, who believed them to have been all "papists"), they are absurd—they lived before Popery was so much as heard of. A man may of course go wrong in the study of the Fathers, just as he may swim in the water and be drowned; but the fault is in himself and his own mismanagement, not in the water. Of two things we are well assured; they who *really* study such writers as the Fathers must be really learned men. No editions of *them* have as yet appeared to make the task of reading them a sinecure. No Mr. Mitchell has yet found a

relief from being “entirely idle”* in explaining away the asperities of their style. And next, we feel assured that all persons who really are acquainted with them, will not deprecate the study of those authors from which these ancient men have so largely borrowed in the way of illustration; and which evidently must, to them, have formed a prominent object of their pursuit.

But to proceed: we do not think the study of theology, pursued at the right time and in the right manner,† need interfere with the classical studies of the University. Still less can we think that any present excitement will have the effect upon us which some persons anticipate. The *real* causes of the unsatisfactory condition of classical literature are, we think, of much longer standing. They are, a want of a more efficient system of classical instruction—a better plan of encouragement in the way of classical distinctions; and better directed efforts on the part of students themselves. We will venture to offer a few remarks on each of these particulars.

Every one in the least acquainted with the University is aware what are the means which exist at present for classical instruction amongst us. There is the Greek Professor; there are the College lec-

* Preface to *OEdipus Tyrannus*.

† Of course, in objecting to the too early pursuit of *theology*, we do not refer to ordinary religious knowledge: we allude to religious *controversy*.

With a view to assist such among us as might wish to make theology their future study, we had thought of a selection from the best parts of the ancient Fathers, illustrated with critical notes, after the manner of the best editions of the classics. But the scheme was declined by the booksellers.

tures ; and there is a system of Private Tuition, intended to supply the real or supposed deficiencies of these.

As regards the first, it is notorious that no instruction whatever emanates from the Greek chair which is available to the younger members of the University. What the benefit is which the labours of its present occupant have conferred upon classical literature in general is known to all the world, and needs no testimony of ours. But this is not the point. The fact is admitted, that no lectures are given, and no benefit immediately derived to our younger students by the circumstance of our possessing, in the person of our Professor, the most accomplished scholar and critic in the country.

Nor does the system of college tuition remedy this deficiency. In the first place, it would be unreasonable to expect of so numerous a body of men, selected in many instances, where the power of choice is small, by the necessity of the case, that every one of them should be a man of first-rate eminence, and competent to give to his pupils that instruction which might lead them to distinguished excellence, and to the attainment of the highest honours. And even if it could be supposed that every college tutor might be a man of the highest eminence in himself, still the plan of college tuition is the worst possible for the full development of his powers. Subjects the most various, e. g. Divinity, Ethics, Logic, Rhetoric, History, and the ordinary topics of classical literature, occupy by turns the mind of the college lecturer ; and the man must be possessed of a peculiarly phlegmatic and self-com-

manding temperament, who does not feel too much wearied with all these subjects in succession, when his lecture time is over, to apply himself to the further prosecution of any one with that degree of vigour which is necessary to infuse continued animation into his subject.

In some cases the attempt is made, we believe, partly to remedy this. But, as a general rule, all college tutors are, more or less, subjected to the disadvantage of giving lectures on a variety of subjects; and, as no one can be expected to excel in all, so few have the opportunity and inclination for prosecuting any one branch to a further extent than the exigencies of their position may require. At Christ Church, indeed, there is a Greek Lecturer, who gives to the men of the whole college of a certain standing, lectures on a Greek and Latin subject alternately. This is a type of what might be done as regards the whole University: and the character of the gentlemen who occupy this post, is a sufficient warrant that the work is done in the best way which circumstances admit. But even in this case the lecturer is burdened by the additional duties of college lectures, examinations, etc., etc.; and is therefore subject, even more than the rest, to the disadvantages to which we have alluded.

• But again: college lectures must necessarily be inefficient for the purposes of first-rate classical instruction, inasmuch as they are given to a mixed audience, whose intellectual capacities vary from the summit to the base of the scale. All these, however, must be included in the business of the lecture; and the lecturer must accommodate his re-

marks in due proportion to all. They have a full right to expect this if they have paid the fees for tuition; and a lecturer would not be doing his duty did he apply himself exclusively, or even principally, to the task of giving instruction of a higher kind to the minority capable of receiving it. Hence it comes to pass, that to a man of superior abilities, without implying any inefficiency or backwardness on the tutor's part, college lectures on classical subjects must not only be absolutely inadequate to his wants, but often a positive waste of time. Men, therefore, of this class, who either do not feel competent to carry forward their studies for themselves, or who are anxious not to omit securing any advantage which is open to others, have recourse to another expedient for satisfying their demands.

This is Private Tuition: a thing not originally contemplated in the University system, and which has grown up beside it as a tacit acknowledgment of its defects. Private tutors may be divided into two classes.* The first is of those who labour with such men as, without their assistance, wou'd (to use a technical term) infallibly be *plucked*, and who not unfrequently are so, notwithstanding the most strenuous and unremitting efforts on the part both of tutor and pupil to avoid the catastrophe. A

* The private tutors at Christ Church form an exception to the general body, as they are appointed by the Dean, and not permitted to receive any men except of their own college: and these, in their turn, are required to seek no other instruction (as supplementary to college lectures) than what the resident non-official graduates of their college can afford them. But these being an exception do not affect the general argument.

species of this genus are those, who having wasted three-fourths of their time at college in various excesses, or in indifference to the object which brought them thither, fly to a private tutor in the remnant which is left, as to a kind of supernatural assistance, which they trust may save them from the disgrace which they have deserved. But we shall not draw invidious distinctions, and shall dismiss these for the present.

Private Tutor class No. 2. boasts a more select audience for his disciples. He is sought by those who, being ambitious of literary distinction, apply for assistance to such as they may consider eminently qualified to promote their success. The defects of this part of the system are these:—First, a young man who can afford to pay a private tutor of eminence for first-rate instruction, has an advantage over the man who cannot afford this. Either, therefore, the latter must be placed at a disadvantage for the attainment of contested honours (for, although a man of high powers may, nay, not unfrequently does, work out for himself all that a private tutor can teach him, still the rapidity with which the other acquires his knowledge, must give him, to a certain degree, the superiority), or he must encroach too much upon the purse of his friends, already, perhaps, over-strained by the expenses of sending him to the University.

But another defect, of a different character, is this:—By a sort of double error, such assistance is regarded at once as of too much and of too little value. Men seek it just when they should have been able to dispense with it, and hence the result

is rarely satisfactory. Instead of seeking it in the first instance, they usually defer it till the very last; and hence that despicable system of “cramming,” so humiliating to the tutor who will condescend to employ it, and so destructive to the pupil who demands it. By “cramming” is meant, the crowding into the smallest possible space of time the largest possible amount of matter likely to be “set” in the approaching examination. It is sought upon the supposition, that the work of many years may be compressed into a single term—and, no doubt, instances of felicitous “cramming” are on record, emanating from tutors who are more anxious for the reputation of successful tuition, by whatever means acquired, than sensible of the dignity of their profession, and the extreme evils with which such a system is fraught. But all things find their level eventually; and amongst others the successful prizeman, who dressed out in honours not his own, carries off the tribute of transitory applause.

Moveat cornicula risum furtivis nudata coloribus. In the term which precedes the examination for University scholarships, or in that in which the Degree Examination comes on, men will crowd to a private tutor of reputation for that kind of instruction, which, had they sought it at the outset instead of at the termination of their probation, and then patiently worked out for themselves the principles they had imbibed, would probably, with the same amount of outlay, have secured a very different result. The remarks and criticisms of Porson and Elmsley, of Monk, Blomfield and Dindorf, the Eleven Canons of Dawes, the Notes of Hermann on Viger, the Dissertations of

Bentley on Phalaris, of Wolf on the Leptines, of Buttmann on the Midias, and a number of treatises of a similar description, are all devoured with an avidity inspired by the shortness of the time allowed for the repast; and the tutor is required to present all these to his pupils in a state the most convenient for immediate deglutition. To these are added a number of what are called "hard passages," picked out from the whole range of authors likely to be selected by the examiners, and which, with an utter disregard of subject matter and context, an attention to which would often have removed the difficulty, the tutor is expected to explain off-hand to the pupil, to enable him to write off the explanation by rote at the ensuing contest. What amount of digestive process can have taken place meanwhile, we leave to those versed in mental phenomena to decide. For ourselves we do not hesitate to condemn the whole system in the strongest and most unmeasured terms, and to declare our contempt for any such practices. We may state for the information of those whom it may concern to know, that we never ourselves remember an instance where the plan succeeded. Indeed, any thing more ludicrously absurd than the attempts made under a plan like this, the *purpurei assuti panni*, which by the utter want of uniformity exhibited in the rest of the examination, display so unequivocally the source whence they are derived, it would hardly be possible for any one who did not know it from experience to conceive. They remind us of the remark which Porson used to make upon some of the Cambridge prize poems. "There is in them," said the Professor, "a great deal of

Horace, and a great deal of Virgil, but nothing *Horatian*, and nothing *Virgilian*."

To those however, who, having more wisdom and forethought, seek instruction of this kind at the right time, and apply it in the right manner, there can be no doubt but that great advantage must, in most cases, arise from their so doing. And this remark will bring us to the suggestion with which we purpose to close this portion of our observations ; namely, that a better system of classical instruction should be devised.

We think it can scarcely be doubted that the classical instruction of the University, so far as *Greek* is concerned, should be superintended by the Greek Professor. Why this is not the case at present, a reason may be given which must immediately come home to every body's feelings. The salary is forty pounds a year. So long as this continues to be the case, no one can reasonably complain that the active duties of the office have fallen into abeyance.

But although we have a Professor of Greek, we have no Professor of Latin. It cannot be supposed that the duties of both these offices can be united in one individual ; and the non-existence of a Chair of Latin is a discredit to both our Universities. Latin is a language, if properly considered, of equal importance and difficulty with Greek : affording equal matter for illustration and criticism ; and abounding with authors, if not so interesting, yet of equal moment with the other ; a provision for this, therefore, it should be equally the object of our authorities to secure.

We do not presume to decide what course it

would, under all circumstances, and with due regard to the convenience of parties holding office at the present time, be advisable to adopt—supposing that the authorities of the University should think this subject worth taking into their consideration. We are aware of the difficulty of speaking without offence on any point which concerns our superiors in office; and we wish to avoid all possible appearance of legislating for them. Moreover, it is one thing to suggest, and another thing to decide how far it may be expedient to carry suggestions into practice. We will venture, however, to offer a few remarks as to the advantages which we conceive might arise, upon the hypothesis of an alteration being made in the existing system.

Our *ideal** is a very simple one: the appointment by the University of a Professor of Latin as well as one of Greek—to be elected like the other, upon the sole ground of his acknowledged ability for the office; and that both should be remunerated in a manner sufficient to justify the expectation that they would efficiently discharge the duties which would be assigned to their respective posts.

The advantages which we conceive would result are as follows:—

1. Regular lectures would be delivered, throughout the term, on all subjects connected with Greek and Latin criticism and philology, to all Members of the University alike who might be desirous of

* If any one should feel disposed to insinuate that we are wishing for such an appointment ourselves, and that it is with a view to this that our remarks are written, we recommend them not to judge harshly the motives of others.

attending them. The attendance need not be compulsory : in fact it would be expedient that it should *not* be so. The fee paid by each member should be small,* and levied from all persons alike (servitors excepted), as a part of their University expenses. A division into a senior and junior class would enable the Professor to adapt his instructions, as far as necessary, to different stages of progress :† and the two Professors might be attended, on alternate days, according to a plan which might easily be arranged. A convenient hour might be fixed for the delivery of these lectures, not interfering with other university or college duties, nor vexatiously intruding upon the time which is usually devoted to purposes of relaxation.

These Lectures should embrace every thing which is necessary to the full and critical understanding of the Greek and Latin classics, and should omit nothing which the student, ambitious of the highest distinction, could possibly desire. They should be

* A terminal fee of 1*l.*, levied from each undergraduate, might be suggested as a proper way of providing salaries for the Professors. We have no wish to see the stipend of such Professorships increased by the annexation of livings or canonries, as has been the case with those of Hebrew and Divinity. It would be but a sorry expedient to take the proceeds of ecclesiastical benefices to pay Professors who are not Theological : it would be fulfilling the old adage of “robbing Peter to pay Paul.”

† Of course a certain amount of previous knowledge is supposed in all who would attend these lectures. This can only be looked to by those who send sons or pupils to college. If men cannot come *tolerably* well prepared, they had far better not come at all. It would be well if the standard of admission were so raised, and such a previous examination insisted upon, as to exclude *flagrant ignorance* in any case from entering the University.

uniform and systematic in their method, addressed as to those who would be expected regularly to attend the whole series, and were prepared to admit the principle, that all real excellence in such studies must be the work of time and diligent application. The *subjects* of the Lectures should be the *ordinary* range of classics, including none but those which are strictly termed such: and avoiding such portions even of these as are peculiarly disfigured by corruptions in the text. These subjects would be explained and interpreted to the class by the Professor, accompanied by as much of collateral and illustrative matter as should flow naturally from the subject, and be calculated to benefit the pupil, without being a mere exhibition of the learning of the Professor himself.* By this plan, and by a judicious variation of the subjects throughout the entire course, we not only conceive that an amount of classical instruction, upon the whole, would be given, fully adequate to every possible want, but that each individual Lecture would be far superior to those which the best private tutor, wearied and impatient by a succession of pupils, and by the necessity of reiterating the same topics from hour to hour, can possibly be expected to furnish. Nay, we doubt not but that Lectures might thus be given worthy to stand a comparison with those of such men as Ruhnken and Wyttenbach, and which would reflect honour, not only on the Professor, but upon the University and country at large.

2. But another and very important duty of these

* Some admirable remarks on the proper method to be adopted, will be found in Wyttenbach's Life of Ruhnken, p. 73 seqq.

two Professors should be to conduct the examinations, which are held from time to time in the University, of candidates for classical honours. We do really think this to be a matter of the very highest moment. It is but a simple act of justice towards the candidates, and it is one which they have an undoubted right to claim at the hands of the University, that the persons appointed to decide upon their respective merits, should be persons concerning whose pre-eminent capacity to judge in such matters there can be no shadow of doubt. If it be not so, the examination passes into a mere judicial farce : and it cannot be expected but that complaints will be made, and much dissatisfaction expressed. Under the arrangement which we suggest, this could not be the case : and we really see no other way so effectual for securing the interests of the competitors. As the instruction given by the Professors would be given equally to all, no objection could be made on the score of some of the candidates being pupils of the examiner ; an objection which, when it occurs, as it does sometimes, under the present system, is certainly a most serious one. In such matters, the possibility, nay, even the *appearance* of the possibility of partiality should be avoided. It would, however, be right, with a view to any cases of difference of opinion, as well as on some other grounds, that one more examiner should be added as a coadjutor to the Professors : and if this person also could be permanent in his appointment, it would conduce greatly to the efficiency and convenience of the arrangement. The public Orator, a handsome fee being paid him for the duty, would perhaps not be an unfit person to be selected for this office.

We do not know how far the existing Statute, as regards the examiners appointed to decide the Craven Scholarship, and University Latin Prize Poem could be dispensed with, but if these two could be brought under the same regulations as the others, it would be highly expedient that it should be so. Some of the present examiners, who have their appointment in virtue of offices wholly irrelevant to the adjudication of classical honours, must occasionally feel themselves placed in a painful position by the duty which is thus assigned them. We mean nothing personal, nor have we any individuals in our eye, when we remark, that a man may be an admirable Proctor, and yet a very bad classical examiner: and we have no doubt all such would willingly feel themselves released from a responsibility, which must either be not fulfilled at all, or else under a consciousness of inability: an alternative equally unpleasant to the parties concerned. This remark will of course no less apply to all *ex officio* appointments of examiners,* than to an *ex officio* right on the part of such persons to be examiners themselves.

It would also be highly expedient that the Greek and Latin Professors should superintend the classical portion of the examination for degrees. This would secure at once a proper share of classical scholarship in the examination, and a certainty that so far at least the exact amount of merit due to each individual would be assigned him. And if the principle could be still further extended, so as to make the

* The ratification of such appointments by convocation is in effect nugatory: as few members of convocation will concern themselves in

Professors of other departments respectively the judges of these departments in the examination, it would make our system of examinations, in our judgment at least, as complete and efficient as the nature of the thing permits.*

3. Another advantage which would naturally result from the establishment of two active classical Professorships would be, the production of editions of the classical authors more suited for the exigencies of academical study than the great majority of those which exist at present. Especially the Professor would apply himself to the preparation of correct texts, in a cheap and accessible form, of the authors *usually* studied in the University. He would be assured of a compensation for his labour, and would not be scared and dispirited towards such undertakings by the humiliating pittance which modern publishers offer to the English scholar for the fruits of his industry and ability. It reflects no credit on our Universities that our younger students should be *compelled* to seek the labours of German scholars because no editions of equal excellence have emanated from ourselves: and the works of foreign editors, printed at our press for the use of the University, do not place our own capacity as editors in the highest possible point of view. But it can scarcely be otherwise. Enthusiasm itself grows cold when it feels that it is not appreciated; and a few negotiations with the bookseller are

* It will of course be understood that we fully admit that more competent men than some of our examiners, appointed under the present system, could not be found. Our objections lie against the uncertainty of the system, we have nothing to do with individual cases.

enough to chill the warmest aspirations after literary fame.

We will now allude to some objections which might be offered to the plan which we have proposed.

It may be imagined that the number of those who would resort to the Professors' lectures, would diminish their efficiency. We wish we could believe that there were any real cause for such an apprehension. But the fact of the attendance not being compulsory, and the fee paid being so small, there would probably be no lack of defaulters among men who either do not care for this kind of instruction, or who would be too indolent regularly to seek it. We do not fear that the lecture room would be over-crowded ; and the division into a senior and junior class, would, we have no doubt, be amply sufficient to bring the audience, on an average, into a manageable compass. The only difficulty which we apprehend might arise would be in the department of composition, in so far as the *practice* of it is concerned. But even this might be arranged. The *principles* of correct and elegant composition may be delivered to ever so large an auditory : and we do not doubt that arrangements might be devised for superintending the practice also of such as might desire it, without being inconvenient to the pupil, or needlessly burdensome to the Professor.

It might possibly also be imagined, on the part of the students themselves, that, as the plan which we propose would place all in an equally favourable position as regards opportunity for improvement, there would not be sufficient room for competi-

tion. We regard this as the essential excellence of the plan. But there would, in fact, be exactly the same room for variety of ability to display itself. The advantage, although virtually offered to all alike, would be really felt in exact proportion to the amount of diligence and capacity on the part of each pupil to appropriate it to himself. And as for any advantage which wealth may secure in respect of the attainment of University rewards, we hope no one will differ from us in considering that all such timocratical distinctions, in a case where ability alone should be the stepping-stone to honour, ought, if possible, to be at once and for ever done away.

A more serious objection, if true, would be, that the proposed plan might interfere with the interests of private tutors, and deprive them of their present sources of emolument. We have such an opinion of the sacredness of existing rights, that we should be the last to recommend any scheme of improvement which could be shown to militate against them. No person has a right to suggest anything by which another would be deprived of an existing privilege, unless at the same time he proposes an equivalent compensation. Even the fact of the present system being bad, would be no reason why we should commit an act of injustice towards individuals to remove it. But we do not think this objection will be found to be a valid one.

It would interfere with those private tutors alone whose pupils read with them for the highest University honours. These, of course, under the plan suggested, would find all necessary assistance in the public lectures of the Professors; aided by those

private suggestions which they would readily give to any who might, under proper circumstances, solicit their advice. But the number of tutor swho receive such pupils, is exceedingly small :* and very few among the whole range of tutors would find their occupations or interests in any way interfered with by the proposed alteration.

The ordinary body of private tutors would not be injured at all. There would still remain that very numerous class of men who cannot obtain their degrees without the continual assistance of a tutor. There is no fear of their number diminishing : and the private tutors may look for the fullest employment, according to their respective rates of speed in instilling the necessary amount of knowledge, as long as the University has an existence. Nor do we see any objection to the system of Private tutorship, as far as these men are concerned. No conceivable plan of public instruction would adequately meet the necessity of their case. Whatever they acquire must be through the reiterated efforts of the tutor to impress it, step by step, upon their minds. These, therefore, would still remain for the benefit of those who wish to derive their income from this source. Nor can any objection be made on the ground of the advantage which money would give for enabling those who could afford it to obtain this private in-

* Of course this observation applies to those who read with men the higher classics alone. Were the principle of professional instruction extended to the department of " Science," as it is called, the interests of more might be affected. We cannot, however, but think the principle of private tuition, as now carried on, equally bad as regards *all* reading for honours.

struction. Few men of less than ordinary ability come up to college, who cannot well afford to pay for such instruction; they would otherwise scarcely think of coming hither, as they would be out of their element altogether. Besides, these are not contending for any prize open to competition, but merely for an ordinary degree. But, on the contrary, there are many men of excellent capacity, and fully equal, under equal advantages, to others for the attainment of distinction, who may yet, from their inability to pay a private tutor, be placed at a disadvantage as regards the rest. And such men are especially the objects of our solicitude.

Lastly, we do not suppose that any College Tutors would object to the scheme which we propose. Even those (and we know there are many such among them) who are competent to give first-rate classical instruction, would willingly abandon a system which does not allow of their effectually doing so; and would be glad to be relieved of a portion of the responsibility, far too much multiplied, which they have at present. And we are sure that the general feeling of all unprejudiced persons would be in favour of any suitable plan for securing to the higher classes of our youth, through the most proper medium, that kind of instruction, which it is undoubtedly the duty, and which it ought to be the pride and endeavour, of a great University to bestow.

We proceed now to the second suggestion which we had to offer;—a more effectual system of classical encouragements and rewards.

The University distinctions open to classical stu-

dents are at present as follows:—The Ireland Scholarship, which claims the highest place of all, inasmuch as it is open to all classes of undergraduates, of whatever standing they may be, and in which, as hardest to achieve, the victory is consequently the greatest; the Hertford Latin Scholarship, which differs from the former, in being confined to candidates of two years' standing only; the Craven Scholarship, which occurs as vacancies arise, but which, as excluding candidates who are on the Foundations of colleges, does not present so large a field for competition; the University Latin Prize Poem; and the Examination for Degrees. We include this last because we feel assured, that no classic of first-rate eminence will fail to attain the highest place, who will take the trouble to satisfy the examiners, by an ordinary amount of diligence in the other departments involved in the examination. This requires no great deal of labour, and need not be regarded as a hardship. With the exception of a prize for Greek verse, analogous to the Porson Prize at Cambridge, which, *we believe*, has been offered to the University, and, we cannot conceive on what sufficient grounds refused, we think these honours amply enough for all purposes. More would only create confusion. One thing, however, we would earnestly urge upon examiners for University scholarships (whether appointed under the present, or under a different system), namely, to mention, after the name of the successful candidate, the names also of the next four, five, or six, according as the case might be, deserving of an honourable distinction. We are

aware that this has occasionally been acted upon : but it should be acted upon regularly, and it should be understood beforehand that this would be the case. The names should be, if possible, arranged in order of their respective merit, or if any were nearly equal, they might be mentioned as such. Should the difference between the successful candidate and the next man be *very* marked, this should, in justice to the former, be signified ; and this might be done, either by intimation to that effect, or by omitting the mention of any others altogether.

It is not reasonable to suppose, that men will work with proper zeal, if they have no nearer and surer prospect of distinguishing themselves than the examination for degrees. Distance certainly lends no enchantment to the view of such distinctions ; they are felt more in proportion as they are nearer. This would also be but fair towards the candidates themselves. A man may not be *the first*, yet he may be so near to the first place that it may reasonably be conjectured that a mere accidental difference might have placed him there, and it is unfair to pass such a man over altogether. One, of course, only can obtain the prize, when one only is open to competition ; but it is possible that several candidates, each highly worthy of distinction, may, at one and the same time, be in the field ; and the mention we have suggested would be a sufficient inducement and compensation, whilst want of success could not possibly be considered as a disgrace. The Prize Poem, as a matter of taste rather than scholarship, need not, we think, be included in this arrangement.

But besides these University distinctions, we would further recommend, that, at the close of each term, an examination, under the combined superintendence of the Professors, should be held of all such, among those who had attended their Lectures, as might be willing to offer themselves for distinction. Three days would be amply sufficient for the purpose. A list of these, the names being arranged in order of respective merit, and divided into the senior and junior classes, might be prepared by the Professors during the vacation ; and, at the commencement of the ensuing term, be suspended in some public place for inspection. We do not doubt that candidates enough would present themselves each time to make the first place on the list a distinction well worthy of attainment. A certificate of having attended this examination might dispense with that portion of “ collections ” which refers to this department, and thus lighten the labours of the college tutor. And the examination itself might be properly omitted in the term in which a University scholarship is offered for competition ; and also, individually, in the case of those who should be about to present themselves for final examination.

Our last observation has reference to the want of a better system of reading, on the part of the students themselves. We shall be brief on this head ; for our remarks are not addressed directly to them, although especially intended for their benefit. Anything more unsystematic, desultory, and ineffective than the methods usually adopted even by those who come fresh from the best instruction

which the country affords, it would be difficult to conceive. When delivered from the restrictions of school business and hours (we allude now to those who profess to be really desirous of improvement and distinction), they seem to be entirely out at sea, and to have little idea how to manage for themselves. Of course there are exceptions ; but we state the general result of our experience. We have also been forcibly struck by the *fragmentary* nature of their attainments. This must, of course, in some degree, be the case with every plan of school instruction ; but they who would desire real advancement, must learn early to supply this deficiency for themselves. We scarcely remember to have known any instance of a pupil coming up to college, who had read thoroughly *the whole* of any one Greek or Latin author. Yet the doing so is absolutely indispensable to that sound and accurate knowledge which alone deserves the name of scholarship ; and which consists in the full sense and perception of those characteristic differences of style which belong essentially to each. And this can only be acquired by that systematic method which Wyttenbach well speaks of, in his life of Ruhnken,* as “*regiam illam viam gravissimorum et antiquissimorum quorumque deinceps scriptorum ex ordine legendorum.*” Indeed there is no other way : and they who would make good scholars must make them so by insisting, in the first instance, on its necessity.

This would be one essential part of the office of the two Professors whose appointment we have sug-

* We cannot too strongly recommend the reading of this admirable work to all young students who may see these remarks.

gested, namely, to direct the attention of their auditory to the best and most systematic method of occupying their time. Were this done, we should have no absurd inquiries made of the Tutor as to what is likely to be “set” in the examination. Prepared gradually but surely at all points—and strengthened by the discipline of continual examinations in the lecture-room—the trials for University honours would be regarded in the light, not of a toil, but of a relaxation. Like the Roman soldiers, accustomed to carry double armour in time of peace, they would find their previous preparations more than adequate to the exigencies of the contest. The flower of the University would then offer themselves for the competition as men trained and ready for the battle. It would be really a contest of mind with mind; not, as is now too often the case, of a more powerful with a less retentive memory: and the value of the honour would be raised in proportion to the increased number of the candidates and to the acknowledged eminence of those who were to be the judges of their success.

We are no advocates for any excessive degree of study, especially in early years: indeed it seldom succeeds. He who can either mark out for himself, or who will accept at the suggestion of another, an effective scheme of study, needs not to consume the midnight oil. He may, as he ought to do, engage in everything which is a proper means of health, relaxation, and enjoyment. The body has its claims upon our attention, no less than the mind; and the neglect of the one will assuredly interfere with the business of the other. But he who has thoroughly

imbued himself with the spirit of antiquity, will not be content to wear away his life as a mere expounder of words and phrases. These he will study and that accurately, but he will not terminate his efforts here ; and herein he will differ from some who in disparaging what they call “verbal criticism,” decry that which they themselves have been unable to attain. There are two kinds of knowledge, says Erasmus,* “*verborum prior, rerum potior;*” and we must proceed through the former to the latter. If however there be any who rest satisfied with the former alone, they merely shew, that although they may understand the language, they have failed to imbibe any portion of the spirit of those whose disciples they profess themselves to be.

We now bring our observations to a close, not without an anticipation that we may incur the disapprobation of some, who may think that any proposal for alteration in existing arrangements should proceed from those in authority alone; and also the commiseration of some others, who may think the subject which we have treated to be one, especially at the present time, of too little importance to deserve any formal notice. To the displeasure of our superiors, if justly incurred by any thing which we have said, we should be keenly sensible : we can honestly affirm, that we are not among those who like to waste their time by offering them advice which they do not ask, and to which, consequently, they seldom attend. But the subject seems to be so overlooked by those in authority, that one who can, at least, allege some experience of facts, and who certainly is conscious

* De Studiorum Ratione, chap. ii.

of no interested feeling in the matter, may, perhaps, be excused for coming forward. It is due to the memory of our departed benefactors, who founded our scholarships and prizes, to maintain the dignity of their benefactions, and to secure the best administration of the provisions which they have made in our behalf. As for those, if any such there be, who may despise the classics as a pursuit, and pity those who still identify themselves with studies which *they* regard as trivial and unimportant, we can only reciprocate the feeling towards themselves, if they think they can build any solid superstructure, except on the basis of a profound knowledge of those languages through which the learning of the ancient world has been transmitted to our hands. Let them pardon us if we remind them of the answer made by Ruhnken to Alberti, when advised by him to turn his thoughts to theological criticism :—“*Hoc tum faciam,*” said he, “*quum satis percepero antiquas et germanas Græcas literas ; sine quibus novitiae istæ ac peregrinæ percipi non possunt.*” And we may add the answer of Alberti, “*Enim vero recte mones : et vellem ipse mature hanc viam ingressus essem : nunc quideam sero est.*”

We have no wish to obtain the credit of originators ; we would willingly support *any* fair proposal which might lead to the better cultivation of a field where the harvest indeed is plenteous, though the labourers are few. What we have suggested involves, we hope, nothing monstrous ; it is not an infringement upon, it is only the carrying out of, that which above all things we admire, the *University* system. And we hope there will be some, at least, who will

not think the subject unworthy of notice. Every pursuit has doubtless its own fascinations and rewards. Modern science may have its claims upon us, and open many sublime and more interesting objects of investigation. Astronomy may ascend into the heavens, and find its occupation among the stars; and Geology may go down into the depths, and explore the inmost recesses of Nature's mysteries. But in the study of the classics there is something which comes home even nearer still to our sympathies and feelings; a something which invigorates the understanding, whilst at the same time it enlivens the imagination and warms the heart; and which makes us forget awhile the cares and anxieties of the present, in the contemplation of the glories of a former age.

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